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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 002042

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: CODELS LEVIN AND CASEY DISCUSS SECURITY WITH
PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: President Musharraf met with Senator Levin and Senator Casey May 25 to discuss Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts, recent peace agreements in the border areas, U.S. security assistance, and the worsening economic situation. Musharraf supported the agreements, saying the military would enforce border security if tribal leaders failed to do so. Musharraf also reflected on the deteriorating economic situation, noting the coalition government would need to take "tough" decisions to put it back on track. Musharraf asserted said the U.S.-Pakistan relationship should be characterized by more trust and respect from the U.S. Regarding his political future, Musharraf said he intended to make some "personal decisions" in coming days. End Summary.

AGREEMENTS AND COUNTERTERRORISM: "NOT A BLACK AND WHITE GAME"

¶2. (C) On May 25, Senator Carl Levin and Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr. met with President Pervez Musharraf in his personal residence in Rawalpindi; they began the meeting with a discussion of Pakistan's security situation and efforts to combat extremism in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas, particularly the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

¶3. (C) Senator Levin asked if the increase in suicide bombings in Pakistan had impacted the efforts of the Government of Pakistan (GOP) to secure the border against militants. President Musharraf responded that in developing its counterterrorism strategy, Pakistan had to address both international and domestic threats. The international threat was posed by al Qaeda and other foreign extremist groups who crossed the Pakistan-Afghanistan border for safe haven and recruitment. The domestic threat was posed by Pakistan-based Taliban groups based within the FATA and responsible for suicide bombings throughout the country and the "insidious" spread of talibanism to settled areas. Musharraf observed that these groups often had links to al Qaeda.

¶4. (C) Senators Levin and Casey expressed concerns regarding the enforceability of recent peace deals with tribal elders aimed at denying access and safe haven to militants. Musharraf acknowledged FATA tribal leaders did not easily accept their responsibility and acknowledged trouble would likely continue in these areas. Nonetheless, the peace agreements should go forward, Musharraf said, in hopes they could reduce cross-border attacks and extremist influence in tribal areas. The primary elements of such agreements, he said, should be keeping al Qaeda out, blocking their cross-border attacks, and, perhaps, a timeline for their

eradication.

15. (C) Agreeing it would prove difficult to enforce such agreements, Musharraf said that if the tribesmen failed to uphold their side of the agreements, then the military would take immediate measures, including sealing the border. The military would not allow cross-border attacks to go on unchecked. The President also stressed the need for improved surveillance capability, noting he had requested more sophisticated equipment from the U.S.

16. (C) Senator Levin asked if Taliban leader, Baitullah Mehsud, was involved in the South Waziristan negotiations, observing that Mehsud had publicly announced he would welcome Osama Bin Laden. Musharraf said he thought it possible Mehsud was involved. (Note: GOP officials - both federal and local - deny that Mehsud participated in any talks or negotiations. End Note.) Musharraf agreed Mehsud was a serious threat, adding that he was responsible for many suicide bombings. Pakistan's forces would, Musharraf insisted, "eliminate" Mehsud if they got the chance. Acknowledging the contradiction in possible negotiations with a man targeted for elimination, Musharraf said this was not a "black and white game;" it was sometimes a "vicious game," in which one could not always choose the players. If the tribal leaders doubled-crossed the government, said Musharraf, then the government "would do the same to them."

BUILDING UP THE FRONTIER CORPS

17. (C) Regarding Pakistan's efforts to strengthen its

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counterinsurgency capability, Musharraf described the government's efforts to build up the Frontier Corps. He noted the GOP had added 12 wings (roughly equivalent to 12 battalions) and planned to raise four more. To make the Frontier Corps more effective, Musharraf said the command-and-control structure had been "decentralized," dividing the area of responsibility into four command sectors. The government was also working to improve training and equipment, but Musharraf noted that more funding was needed for this effort. The Ambassador pointed out that USD 275 million in supplemental funding had been requested to strengthen the Frontier Corps.

18. (C) Senator Levin wondered if the Frontier Corps would be more effective if its senior military leaders were Pashtun and if the Army intended to direct more Pashtun soldiers to officer training. (Note: Very few Army officers speak Pashto, the language spoken by the Frontier Corps.) Musharraf agreed this was a good idea and noted the Army sought to appoint Pashtuns to leadership positions when possible. On a related topic, Musharraf said the Army avoided assigning members of the Frontier Corps to their own tribal areas to prevent forcing the men to fight fellow tribesmen.

19. (C) Senator Casey asked what element posed the greatest challenge in terms of border security. Musharraf said the new coalition government needed to "step up and show ownership" of the problem; now that they were in power, they could not "pass the buck" and blame him. Musharraf said he knew the government opposed the militants, but he did not think the "concerted will" was there to go after them. It was easier, he said, to blame the military. Musharraf also charged the media with unjustified criticisms of the Army.

110. (C) Senator Levin asked if substantial U.S. security assistance contributed to the perception that Pakistan was serving as a U.S. proxy in the war on terror. Musharraf assured the Senator it did not.

MUSHARRAF SAYS TRUST IS THE KEY

111. (C) When asked how the U.S. could best strengthen

bilateral relations and create a more positive perception of the U.S. in Pakistan, Musharraf asserted that trust was the key. The U.S. needed to demonstrate it trusted Pakistan, especially in light of the widely-held view that the U.S. had let Pakistan down in the past and was only engaged now to further its own interests. Musharraf noted that Pakistan feels the U.S. treats India as an equal partner - unlike Pakistan - particularly on nuclear issues. He stated the nation's nuclear assets were "the pride of each and every man" in Pakistan, but the U.S. would not accept this. The U.S., Musharraf stated, preferred the bombs in Israel and India because they were not "Muslim bombs."

¶12. (C) Regarding security assistance, Musharraf said Pakistan had not been given much help in the context of the struggle Pakistan faced and the assistance the U.S. was providing in Iraq and Afghanistan. He said more could be done on the economic assistance front as well - reconstruction opportunity zones (ROZs), greater market access, a bilateral investment treaty, etc. Regarding the USD 750 million FATA Development Plan, Musharraf said Pakistan hadn't "seen a penny."

¶13. (C) Senator Casey asked if the perception of the average Pakistani was that the U.S. was not here for the long-term and Musharraf replied affirmatively, noting that the more educated citizenry assumed the U.S. would be engaged with Pakistan over the long-term but for its own security interests and not to help Pakistan. Musharraf said this perception was based on past experience, noting the U.S.-Pakistan relationship has been seriously strained at times. He specifically referred to the interrupted F-16 deal in the early 1990s as still being a sore point with the Pakistani people, recalling that not only had the U.S. refused to deliver F-16s purchased by Pakistan, but had charged Pakistan storage costs for the planes.

¶14. (C) Musharraf stressed the importance of political stability in promoting Pakistan's economic well-being and

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success in counterterrorism efforts. Expressing surprise at how fast the economy had spiraled downward, Musharraf said foreign investors were now shying away. He added that he hoped the coalition government could solve these problems and put the "derailed" economy back on track, though it might require some tough decisions.

MUSHARRAF CONSIDERING HIS FUTURE

¶15. (C) Regarding his future, Musharraf said that he could not yet comment until he knew himself what it would be, but that he needed to "take some personal decisions" in the coming days.

¶16. (U) CODELS Levin and Casey did not clear this cable.

PATTERSON